

Weaning From a Nipple Shield

- ❑ Hand-express to soften your areola before latching so your breast is more graspable. Flat nipples usually do not inhibit latch-on except when breast fullness is causing the nipples to flatten. The tightness of the breast hampers the baby's ability to draw it into the mouth properly.
- ❑ If necessary, start the feeding with the shield in place. After three to four minutes, or when you feel your milk letting down and she starts to sputter, take her off, remove the shield, and before she knows you've made the switch, put her back on.
- ❑ After a few days, latch-on should occur more spontaneously without priming the feeding with the shield. Some mothers find priming the breast with a pump helpful (pumping for a few minutes before latching) as well.
- ❑ If your baby opens wide but does not grasp when offered the breast, try letting your baby suck on your finger while in the nursing position.
- ❑ To do this, place a washed index finger in your baby's mouth. (Position your finger so the pad is on the roof of the mouth and the nail side toward the tongue.)
- ❑ Introduce your finger slowly and carefully to allow your baby to accept it without gagging. After a few sucks, quickly remove your finger and latch your baby to the breast.
- ❑ Another family member can assist you by using a washed finger as well. This will enable you to stay in latch-on position so latching can be initiated more quickly after the finger is removed.
- ❑ Another thing that works nicely is to wait until the baby is sleeping, or very tired, and then let him/her nurse (without the shield). Frequently they will open their mouths and suck even when they are tired or sleeping.
- ❑ It is also ok to use the shield as long as you want. It just makes it more complicated to breastfeed.
- ❑ Try wearing the shells between feedings, to keep the nipple stimulated, and this may help your son/daughter have a better base to grasp.
- ❑ Also rolling your nipples prior to feeding will help them become erect, and then you can try to pop the baby on.

- ❑ When using a shield you'll need to carefully assess your baby for adequate intake.
- ❑ Count his wet diapers every day and make sure that he's having at least 6 really wet ones each 24-hour period.
- ❑ You also will want to make sure that he stools at least twice daily if he is less than 5-6 weeks of age. After 5-6 weeks, his stools may only come every few days, but should still be loose and profuse if many days have passed.
- ❑ He will also need to be weighed frequently - at least every 2 weeks (make sure you use the same scale).
- ❑ You will also want to listen for frequent swallowing during the feeding and feel for overall good breast softening after the feeding.
- ❑ If your breasts are not well softened after each feeding, you will need to pump until they are softened to ensure that your supply remains adequate. This will lessen your risk for plugged ducts and help to maintain your supply.
- ❑ If baby doesn't take the breast without the shield relatively easily, give it to him with the shield.
- ❑ DO NOT allow him to become frustrated at the breast. That will only make him more resistant to breastfeeding.
- ❑ Allow baby to build trust that nursing will work and will be ok, even if that means using the shield to make it familiar and easy for him. Once he builds trust, start to remove the shield after he has been on for awhile
- ❑ Sometimes it works to offer the first breast with the shield and the second one without it, if your baby takes both breasts in one feeding.
- ❑ Be sure *not* to make this a battle with the baby, or he will resist more.
- ❑ Don't obsess with weaning off the shield to the point that you're robbed of the joy of breastfeeding. As long as your baby is gaining weight well, then you have some time to play with.
- ❑ Keep trying as often as you can, and give it some time. There are some reports of moms continuing to use the shield for their whole breastfeeding experience, but most moms have taken anywhere from 2 days to about 4-5 weeks to accomplish completely weaning from the shield.
- ❑ Be patient with yourself and your baby while you work through this transition.